



**THE FARMER
AND
SOLDIER.**



PUBLISHED BY THE
American Tract Society,
No. 150 Nassau-street,
New-York.

SERIES II.

NO. XXXVIII.



CHILDREN'S BOOK
COLLECTION



LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

No. 38.

THE

FARMER AND SOLDIER.

BY MRS. L. H. SIGOURNEY.

[FOUNDED ON FACT.]

PUBLISHED BY

THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

No. 150 Nassau-street,

New-York.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

1950

1950

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



THE
FARMER AND SOLDIER.

It was a cold evening in winter. A lamp cast its cheerful ray from the window of a small farm-house in one of the villages of New-England. A fire was burning brightly on the hearth, and two brothers sat near it. Several school-books lay by them on the table, from



which they had been studying their lessons for the ensuing day. Their pa-

rents had retired to rest, and the boys were conversing earnestly. The youngest, who was about thirteen years of age, said,

“John, I mean to be a soldier.”

“Why so, James?”

“Because I have been reading the life of Alexander of Macedon, and also a good deal about Napoleon Bonaparte. I think they were the greatest men that ever lived. There is nothing in this world like the glory of the warrior.”

“I cannot think it is glorious to do so much harm. To destroy great multitudes of innocent men, and to make such mourning in families, and so much poverty and misery in the world, seems to me more *cruel* than *glorious*.”

“O, but then to be so honored, and to have so many soldiers under your command, and the fame of such mighty victories, what glory can there be to compare with this?”

“James, our good minister told us, in his sermon last Sunday, that the end of life was the test of its greatness. Now,

if I recollect right, Alexander, he that you call the Great, got intoxicated, and died like a madman; and Napoleon was imprisoned in a desolate island, like a chained wild beast, for all the world to gaze and wonder at."

"John, your ideas are very limited. You certainly are not capable of admiring heroes. You are just fit for a farmer. I dare say that to break a pair of steers is the height of your ambition, and to spend your days in ploughing and hoeing and reaping is all the glory you would desire."

The voice of their father was now heard calling: "Boys, go to bed." And so ended their conversation for that night.

Thirty years passed away, and the same season again returned. From the same window a bright lamp gleamed, and on the same hearth was a cheerful fire. The building wore an unaltered appearance, but its inmates were changed. The parents, who had then retired to their sleeping apartments, had now gone

down to the deeper rest of the grave.



They were pious, and their virtues were held in sweet remembrance among the peaceful inhabitants of their native village. In the chairs which they used to occupy sat their eldest son and his wife. A babe lay in the cradle near them, and two other little ones were breathing quietly from their trundle-bed, in the profound slumber of childhood. A blast with snow beat against the casement.

“I always think,” said John, “a great deal about poor James at this season of

the year, and especially on stormy nights. But it is now so long since we have heard from him, and his way of life has exposed him to so many dangers, that I fear there is strong reason to believe him dead."

"What a pity," replied his wife, "that he would be a soldier."

A knock was heard at the door. They opened it, and a man leaning upon crutches entered wearily. His garments were thin and tattered, and his countenance haggard. They reached him a chair, and he sank into it. He gazed on each of their faces, then on the sleeping children, and then at every article of furniture, as on some recollected friend. At length, stretching out his withered arms, he said, in a voice scarcely audible, "*Brother!*"—That tone opened the remembrances of many years. They welcomed the returning wanderer, and mingled their tears with his.

"Brother, sister, I have come home to you to die."

They perceived that he was too much

exhausted to converse, and hastened to prepare him fitting nourishment, and to make him comfortable for the night. The next morning he was unable to rise. They sat by his bed-side and soothed his sad heart with kindness, and told him the history of all that had befallen them in their quiet abode.

“Among all my troubles,” said he, “and I have had many, none have so bowed my spirit down, as my sin in leaving home without the knowledge of my parents. I know it was against their will that I should become a soldier, and many were the warnings they gave me not to choose that profession. I have felt the pain of wounds, but nothing like this sting of conscience. I have been a prisoner in the enemy’s hands, and have sometimes lain almost perishing with hunger, or parching with the thirst of fever. Then the image of my home and of my ingratitude would be with me, both when I lay down and when I rose up. Sometimes I would fancy that I saw my mother bending tenderly over me,

as she used to do when I had only a head-ache, and my father with the Bible in his hand, out of which he used to read to us before the evening prayer. But when I lifted my hands to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,"—I awoke, and it was all a dream. But the remembrance of my disobedience would be there, gnawing at my bosom; and how bitterly have I wept to think that the child of so many peaceful precepts and prayers had become a man of blood."

His brother assured him of the entire forgiveness of his parents, and that daily before the family-altar, as well as in their private recesses of devotion, their supplications were poured out for the loved, the absent, the erring son.

"Ah! those prayers followed me. But for them I should have been a reprobate. They plucked me as a brand from the burning, when I seemed forsaken both of God and man."

Gradually, as strength permitted, he

told them his painful history. He had been in battles by sea and land. He had heard the deep ocean echo with the thunders of war, and seen the earth drink in the strange red shower from mangled and palpitating bosoms. He



had stood in the martial lists of Europe, and jeopardized his life for a foreign power, and he had pursued in his own land the hunted Indian flying at midnight from the flames of his own hut. He had gone with the bravest where dangers thickened, and had sought in

every place for the glory of war, but had found only misery.

“That glory which so dazzled my boyish fancy, and which I supposed was always the reward of the brave, continually eluded me. It is only the successful leader of an army that is hailed as a hero, while the poor soldiers by whose sufferings his victories are won, endure the hardship, that they may reap the fame. Yet how light is all the boasted glory that was ever achieved by the greatest commander, compared with the good that he forfeits, and the sorrow that he inflicts in order to obtain it.

“Sometimes, when ready for a battle, just before we rushed into it, I have felt an inexpressible reluctance and horror at the thought of butchering my fellow-creatures. But in the heat of contest all such feelings vanished, and the madness and desperation of a demon possessed me. I cared neither for heaven, nor hell. You who dwell in the midst of the influences of mercy, who shrink to give pain even to an animal, can scarcely be-

lieve what hardness of heart comes with the life of a soldier. Deeds of cruelty are always before him, and he heeds neither the agony of the starving infant, nor the groans of its dying mother. Of my own varieties of pain it will be of no use to speak. When I have lain on the field among the feet of trampling horses, when my wounds stiffened in the chilly night-wind, and no man cared for my soul, I have thought it was no more than just, since my own hand had dealt the same violence to others. But the greatest evil of a soldier's life is not the *suffering* to which he is exposed, but the *sin* with which he is made familiar. Oaths, execrations, contempt of all sacred things every where surround him. The sweet and holy influences of the Sabbath, the peaceful dispositions prayed for at his mother's knee, the blessed precepts of the Gospel graven upon his young heart, are swept away. Yet amid this hardened career, though I exerted myself to appear gay and bold, my heart constantly misgave me. God grant that

it may be purified by the Holy Spirit, and have part in the atonement of a Redeemer, before I am summoned to the dread bar of judgment."

His friends continued to hope that by medical skill and careful nursing his health might be restored. But he said:

"It can never be. Even now, Death is standing at my right hand. When I entered this valley, and my swollen limbs failed, I prayed to my God, O, hold thou me up, but a little longer, that I may reach the home where I was born, confess my guilt, and, pardoned through the blood of Jesus, die there, and be buried by the side of my father and my mother, and I will ask no more."

He felt that there was much to be changed in his soul ere it could be fitted for the holy enjoyments of a realm of purity and peace. He therefore prayed and wept, and studied the Scriptures, and conversed with Christians, and labored to apprehend clearly the magnitude of his sins and the way of salvation.

"Brother, you bid me to be comfort-

ed. You have been a man of peace. In the quiet occupation of husbandry you have served God and loved your neighbor. You have been merciful to the poor brute. You have taken the fleece, and saved the sheep alive. But I have defaced the image of God, and taken away that breath which I never can restore. You have taken the honey, and preserved the laboring bee. But I have destroyed man and his habitation, burned the hive and spilled the honey on the ground. You cannot imagine how strong is the warfare in my soul with the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruleth the children of disobedience."

He declined rapidly. Death came on with hasty strides. Laying his cold hand upon the head of the eldest little boy, he said, "Dear child, do not be a soldier. Sister, brother, you have been as angels of mercy to me; the blessing of the God of peace abide with you, and upon your house."



The venerable minister, who had instructed his childhood and laid his parents in their grave, had continually visited him, and administered spiritual instruction and consolation in his affliction. Now he stood by his side, as he was about to go down into the valley of the shadow of death.

“My son, look unto the Lamb of God.”

“Yes, father! there is a fullness in Him for me, the chief of sinners.”

There was a short and solemn pause. Then the dying man added, “but let no

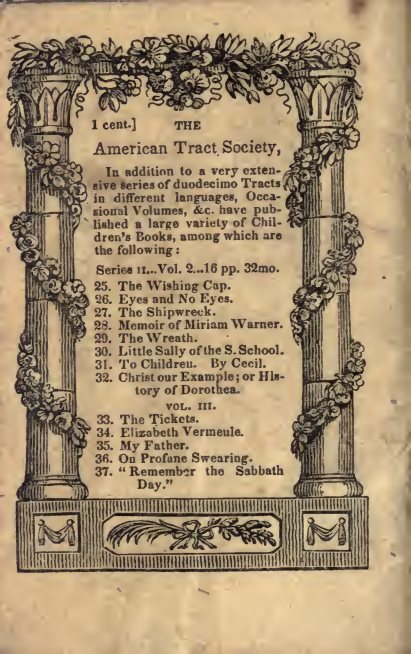
one sin against light, and against love."

The white-haired man of God lifted up his fervent prayer for the departing soul. He commended it to the boundless riches of divine grace, and the infinite compassion of a Redeemer. He ceased, and the eyes of the dying were closed. There was no more gasping, or heaving of the breast. They thought that the breath had forsaken the clay, and spoke of him as having passed where there is no more sin, neither sorrow nor crying.

But there was a faint sigh. The pale lips slowly moved, and bowing down over his pillow, they caught the whisper of his last words on earth, "*Jesus, thou whose last gift was peace, take a sinner unto thee.*"

THE END.





1 cent.] THE
American Tract Society,

In addition to a very extensive series of duodecimo Tracts in different languages, Occasional Volumes, &c. have published a large variety of Children's Books, among which are the following :

Series II.. Vol. 2...16 pp. 32mo.

25. The Wishing Cap.
26. Eyes and No Eyes.
27. The Shipwreck.
28. Memoir of Miriam Warner.
29. The Wreath.
30. Little Sally of the S. School.
31. To Children. By Cecil.
32. Christ our Example; or History of Dorothea.

VOL. III.

33. The Tickets.
34. Elizabeth Vermeule.
35. My Father.
36. On Profane Swearing.
37. "Remember the Sabbath Day."